

THE WRITINGS OF MUḤAMMAD ḤAMIDULLAH IN FRENCH TRENDS AND NOVELTIES*

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The aim of this article is to shed light on the main features of Muḥammad Ḥamidullah's writings in French from 1935 to 1994, as well as some new aspects of his scientific life in Paris where he lived from 1948 to 1996, with particular regard to his correspondence, ignored to this day, with the French Orientalist Henri Massignon. For medical reasons, his niece had to repatriate him to the United States where he died in 2002 at the age of 95 years.

For us, Muslims of France, the most prominent work of Muḥammad Ḥamidullah is the translation of the Holy Qur'ān into French reissued twelve times. He is the first Muslim to translate the Holy Qur'ān into French. The other monumental work of this uncommon scholar is the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ) reissued five times and translated into several languages.

Keywords: Muḥammad Ḥamidullah, French literature, Trends, Novelities.

Introduction

Despite their undeniable importance, the writings of Muḥammad Ḥamidullah in French are still beyond the reach of the overwhelming majority of non-Francophones apart from translations carried out in isolation from time to time. Hence the need to shed light on the features that characterize this literature in the light of new knowledge.

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The present study focuses on the following question: What are the trends and novelties of Ḥamidullah's writings in French? In this context, only the facts unknown in his biography will be approached in the light of the correspondences of Louis Massignon with which he maintained a privileged relationship for three decades, sometimes going as far as raising suspicion assigning him the role of informant indigenous in the constitution of orientalist knowledge.

After specifying the data collection protocol, sketching the French scientific context in which Ḥamidullah operated, and shedding light on his relationship with the orientalist Louis Massignon, the study tackles the major trends of his writings in French through the distribution of writings by year, medium of publication, nature of the writing, and the major themes: Qur'ān, life of the Prophet (ﷺ), law in Islam, economic system in Islam, Muslim question of the Indian Peninsula. The conclusion summarizes the main lessons learned from the analysis of these writings and proposes recommendations for future research dedicated to the thought of this exceptional scholar.

The Data Collection Protocol

The present study is based on one hundred and sixty-four writings and interviews (Appendix), Ḥamidullah in French compiled mainly from the following sources:

- The study '*Contributions of Muḥammad Ḥamidullah in Islamic Economics*' by Abderrazak Belabes¹ who compiled some writings in French, English and Arabic.
- The Sudoc catalog, which is a network of French libraries with more than twelve million references.²
- The website of the French National Library 'Gallica'.³
- The '*Catalogue of Dr. Ḥamidullah's Books and Articles in Various Languages*' compiled by Nadira Mustapha,⁴ taken from her master's thesis "*Muḥammad Ḥamidullah and Islamic Constitutional Law*", supported at the McGill University of Montréal.⁵
- The scanned compilation of Daniel-Youssof Leclercq which contains

documents written by Ḥamidullah anonymously, under pseudonym or with his agreement.⁶ Some references do not mention the name of the publication medium.

The French Scientific Context in which Ḥamidullah Operated

Beyond the subject matter, as historian Sadek Sellam⁷ rightly points out, there are two major aspects that distinguish the scientific work of Ḥamidullah:

On the one hand, the valorization of the Islamic scientific heritage based on the original manuscripts (*makhtūṭāt*) unknown to the French orientalists. Hence Louis Massignon's remark: "*You have supported a good thesis, but without citing any Oriental author*".

On the other hand, the concern to make known the classical Muslim historians unknown or underestimated for one reason or another.

Through this unprecedented approach, he was the interlocutor of the French orientalists with ease, without complex or complacency, at their head: Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes (1862-1957), William Marçais (1872-1956), Louis Massignon (1883-1962), Henri Laoust (1905-1983), Philippe Marçais (1910-1984), Charles Pellat (1914-1992). In his book, '*Introduction to Islam*', he⁸ rightly notes: "*The Muslim does not need lessons or advice from those who do not believe or do not practice Islam*".

If his erudition aroused admiration, his epistemological posture does not fail to arouse mistrust and suspicion on the part of some. In his book review devoted to the book '*The Prophet of Islam*', the orientalist Georges Vajda (1908-1981)⁹ writes: "*The documentation of his two large volumes is very ample; it uses materials that have little or no use to date and benefits from direct knowledge practically rejected by almost all Western Orientalists, the places where the astonishing career of the founder of Islam took place*". The manuscripts in question were collected as indicated by Ḥamidullah¹⁰ in the libraries of Hedjaz, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Germany, Holland, France, Afghanistan, Algeria, India.

In a book review of the same work, Marcel Pacaut¹¹ writes: "*Muḥammad Ḥamidullah's work is not a book of history, it is a testimony, the testimony of a believer who undertakes to explain the*

life, the work and the thought of the founder of Islam [ﷺ] And yet, I dare to say, this book has as much, if not more, interest than the most of the scientific studies on Muḥammad (ﷺ)”.

Furthermore, in his book “Islam and capitalism”, Maxime Rodinson (1915-2004)¹² describes Ḥamidullah as an “*apologist*” and a close associate of the Muslim Brotherhood, although he never adhered to this movement.

For his part, Paul Balta¹³ presents Ḥamidullah as a believer, that is, a Muslim who fulfils his daily religious obligations. This does not favor the development of critical thinking. As Pierre Bourdieu,¹⁴ a sociologist and professor at the Collège de France, the social sciences and militancy, independently of its value framework, can constitute the two sides of the same work: the analysis and critique of the social reality which contribute to its transformation by the creation of new purposes and, consequently, new means of action.

As far as the public is concerned, it is necessary to distinguish between his writings intended for researchers and those intended for the general public, in particular, the translation of the Holy Qur’ān (1959), ‘*The Prophet of Islam*’ (1959), ‘*The pilgrimage to Mecca*’ (1960), ‘*Prayer in Islam*’ (1960), ‘*Why fast?*’ (1961), ‘*Introduction to Islam*’ (1966). For decades, he invested himself in the intellectual and moral support of young Muslims through the creation of the Islamic Cultural Center in 1952, which included among its members Haydar Bammate (1889-1965), Malek Bennabi (1905-1973), Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch (1909-1999), who embraced Islam in 1950. His classes on Sunday were much appreciated at 23 rue Boyer-Barret, headquarters of the Association of Islamic Students in France (AEIF) and then at the Da’wa mosque at 19 rue Tanger.

His approach showed that one could be perfectly Muslim without denying his original culture. As noted by the French writer Malika Dif, who embraced Islam for more than forty-five years, and author of numerous books for Muslims in France,¹⁵ “*Ḥamidullah is one of the Muslim personalities who have paved the way for us. He was the first one who showed us that we could be perfectly Muslim and European. For the French of my generation, converted to Islam, the writings of Ḥamidullah were the first books that made sense of our practice without denying our Western culture*”.¹⁶

A Focus on the Relationship Between Ḥamidullah and Massignon

Although he is considered the greatest French orientalist, the accusation of espionage pursued Louis Massignon for most of his life. In March 1953, the journal of Al-Azhar University '*Majallat al-Ahzar*' accused him of being interested in Ṣūfism only to divert Muslims from the true faith.¹⁷ The journal denounced him as an agent of the Christian missionaries and the French Colonialist Policy.¹⁸ Arab nationalists and Muslim reformers were not left behind. They presented him as an agent in the service of colonialism to compete with Lawrence of Arabia.¹⁹

The reflection of Orientalists, like any human, is not fixed. It can evolve according to the events of life. As historian Sadek Sellam²⁰ points out, Louis Massignon radically changed his attitude towards Muslims following a letter from one of his students, the Algerian essayist and thinker Hamouda Bensai (1902-1998) who prepared a dissertation on Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazali (1058-1111) at the Sorbonne University where he was related to Louis Massignon, and influenced Malek Bennabi (1905-1973), of whom he was a friend.

After the massacres of 8 May 1945 in Algeria, Hamouda Bensai, hospitalized in Paris, received a letter from Massignon requesting permission to visit him. The response of Hamouda Bensai was unequivocal. "*I blame myself for having loved you*", he wrote, reproaching him for making him believe in the possibilities of dialogue between an "*Arab Muslims and French Christians*". This letter profoundly affected Massignon, adviser at the time of the French government for Muslim affairs, who admits to having had "*much difficulty in reading it*".²¹ His article "*Critical hour between France and Islam*" published in the newspaper *Combat* of 22-23 June 1947 testifies to this sentiment: "*For some time now, it was said, a discontent grows and responds in the Muslim world, with cries hostile to France*",²²

His preface²³ to the book of Max Vintejoux '*The Arab Miracle*' confirms this evolution which remains unknown to the Muslim world: "*It is true that the Arabs at present are discouraged by the evil that is said of them. So it is up to their hosts, like Vintejoux, and myself, to shout to our Arab friends to hold out, to resist all this enslaving propaganda which proposes to them to renounce their honor, their tradition, their ancestors, to capitulate before the colonialist force and the capital of the banks to conform their way of thinking and*

acting to this false civilization of robots that no longer believes in itself, nor in God, and aspires to subdue Universe to a climate of American “digests” imbeciles, written in “basic” (or in “pigeon”) English. All this fabrication of fake ersatz will fall shortly. Let them hold on? The world needs them”.

The relationship between Ḥamidullah and Massignon and the letters they exchanged²⁴ must be approached in this evolving context to avoid amalgams, while relativizing the beliefs surrounding orientalism such as “*all Powerful people surrounded themselves with researchers in their pay*”.²⁵ This is what makes the difference between a fixed ideological posture and a historical research, worthy of the name, that evolves according to archival documents and writings buried in the hidden treasures of large public or private libraries.

The Distribution of Ḥamidullah’s French Writings per Year

The distribution of Ḥamidullah’s French writings per year (Fig. 1) shows that the author has devoted his whole life to research since his Ph.D. thesis in history defended at the University of Paris (1896-1968) in 1935 to 1994, two years before leaving for the United States for health reasons. His publication has been regular since 1954 when he benefited from the position of research supervisor, and a few years later research director, at the National Scientific Research Center (CNRS) with the support of Louis Massignon and Henri Laoust, with whom he was a collaborator.

In practice, the activity of each researcher assigned to the CNRS’s research laboratory is evaluated periodically based on his activity report and the list of his publications. In a letter dated February 21, 1962, Louis Massignon writes to Ḥamidullah: “*Send me, in summary, the elements of the report that I must provide on your activity at CNRS*”.²⁶ In addition to purely scientific references, other aspects such as the dissemination of science, teaching activities, science-society relations and openness to the outside world are considered. In a letter dated November 5, 1953, concerning his project of teaching at the University of Istanbul, Ḥamidullah wrote to Louis Massignon: “*I have been to see Mr. Virolleaud,²⁷ who agrees with my departure for Istanbul. Ms. Meyerowitch²⁸ tells me that the director of the CNRS also agrees on this*”.²⁹ In addition, the figure shows that the scientific activity of Ḥamidullah did not stop at retirement in 1978.

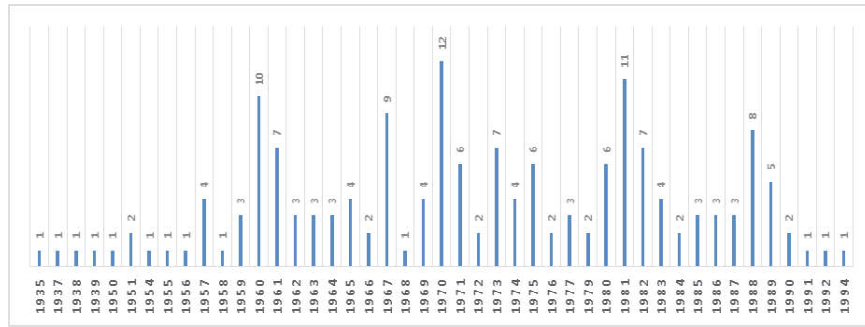


Fig. 1: Temporal distribution of Hamidullah’s French writings

(Source: Prepared by the author)

Distribution per the Medium of Publication

The distribution per medium of publication by volume (Fig. 2a) and percentage (Fig. 2b) shows that most of Hamidullah’s French writings were published in the form of articles (85%), then in books (11%), chapters for books and interviews (2%).

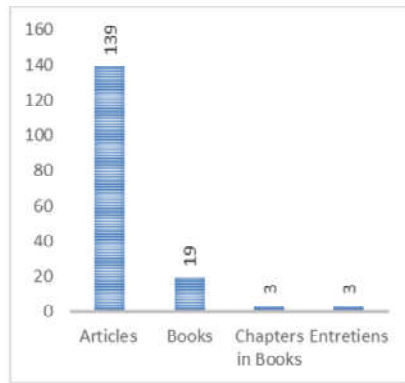


Fig. 2a

Distribution per the Medium of Publication (in volume)

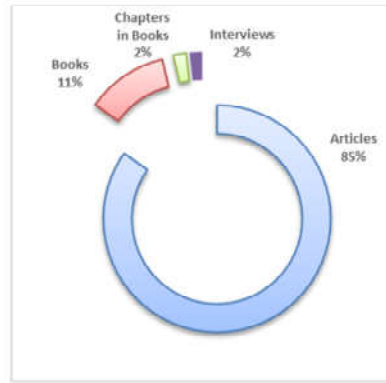


Fig. 2b

Distribution per the Medium of Publication (in percentage)

(Source: Prepared by the author)

Despite his displayed Muslim identity, his articles are published in the most prestigious French journals and magazines devoted to Oriental

and Islamic studies (Fig. 3), which is not easy. Among these journals, were the following:

- *Revue d'études islamiques*: founded by Louis Massignon in 1927;
- *Bulletin d'études orientales*: created in 1931 on the initiative of French researchers working in the Middle East;
- 'Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée' of Aix-en-Provence: originally '*Revue de la Méditerranée*' founded at the University of Algiers in 1944 by Jean Alazard (1887-1960), dean of the faculty of Letters and director of the National Museum of Fine Arts of Algiers. He is the ancestor of the current journal *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*;
- *Arabica* : A journal of Arabic and Islamic studies founded in 1954 by Evariste Lévi-Provençal (1894-1956) historian, orientalist, and French Islamologist.

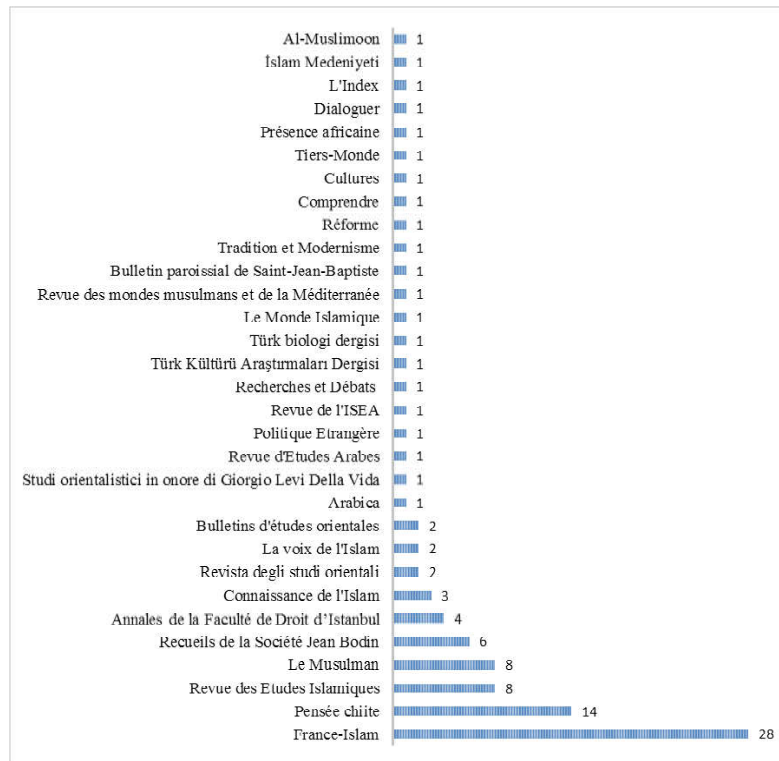


Fig. 3

The journals and magazines that published Ḥamidullah's French articles

(Source: Prepared by the author)

Distribution per the Nature of Writing

The distribution per nature of writing by volume (Fig. 4a) and percentage (Fig. 4b) shows that most of these publications are written (93%) in the form of articles or books.



Fig. 4a

Distribution per the Nature of Writing (in volume)

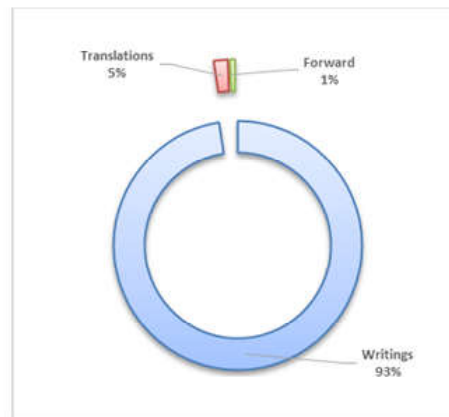


Fig. 4b

Distribution per the Nature of Writing (in percentage)

(Source: Prepared by the author)

They are followed by two translations of Ḥamidullah from Arabic to French:

- The first is *'The Botanical Dictionary'* of Abū Hanīfah al-Dīnāwarī (828-896) (1973), published in Cairo by the French Institute of Eastern Archeology, 1973.³⁰ Among the six volumes, only two have survived to the present day. Volume 6, reconstructed from citations and passages of other works by Muḥammad Ḥamidullah contains the names of 637 plants. It complements the work of Bernhart Lewin (1953), who ranked 400 plants, classified according to the Arabic alphabet.
- The second is *'The Great Book of the International Law'* (the

Kitāb as-Siyār al-Kabīr) by Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (749-805) (1989) published in Ankara by Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1989-1991,³¹ to show that the International law was a discipline in the Muslim world as early as the eighth century.

Then a preface to the book *‘Life of the Prophets’* by Abul al-Ḥasan Alī Nadwī (1914-1999), translated from Arabic to French by de Mohammed Benhamza.³²

The Major Themes of Ḥamidullah’s French Writings

The Translation of the Holy Qur’ān

For the French-speaking Muslims, Ḥamidullah is famous for his translation of the Holy Qur’ān from Arabic to French, carried out in six months and encouraged by Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes and Louis Massignon to overcome the deficiencies of Régis Blachère’s translation.³³

The translation of Ḥamidullah was reissued twelve times between 1959 and 1989 with a preface to the latter, an introduction and notes. It is the eighth French translation of the Qur’ān since 1647 as shown in Fig. 5.

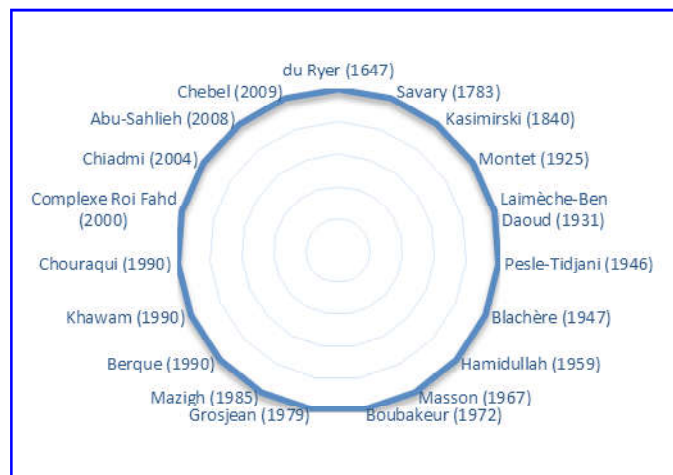


Fig. 5
History of translations of the Holy Qur’ān into French (1647-2009)

(Source : Prepared by the author)

It is more a translation intended for the general public than for a specialized or scholarly public. As Louis Massignon notes, “*the main interest of this translation of the Qur’ān is that it is the reflective work of a Muslim, a thinker and a believer: that this Holy Book concerns personally. He lives with the Qur’ān, he wants to translate it into French as he recites it in Arabic, with a naked Faith*”.³⁴ Hence its success among young Muslims born in France or converted to Islam and the choice of the King Fahd Glorious Qur’ān Printing Complex³⁵ to adopt it with some revisions that are necessary to any human effort regardless of its quality or merit.

The Life of The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)

The life of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the second major Ḥamidullah’s French writings and occupies almost a sixth of his writings in French available today (Fig. 6) over a period of more than half a century since the beginning of his Ph.D. thesis in Paris in 1934, supported

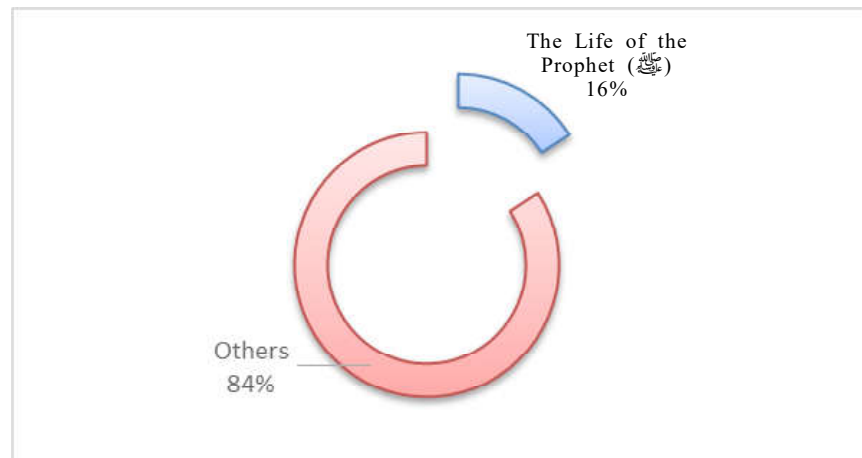


Fig. 6
Proportion of Ḥamidullah’s French writings on the
Life of the Prophet (ﷺ)

(Source: Prepared by the author)

in 1935, until 1990 (Fig. 7). The interest of his thesis is to shed on the existence of intense diplomatic activity during the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ). It has not failed to arouse the admiration of Louis Massignon, one of the members of the jury of the Ph.D. Thesis, according to whom the realization of a work as colossal on the basis of original manuscript constitutes an admirable tour de force. On 1st February 1935, as he was about to embark in Marseilles to India, Ḥamidullah wrote to Massignon:³⁶ “As I leave your country, a little precipitate, I feel obliged to assure you of my sincere gratitude. Indeed, it was you who had encouraged me to come to Paris; and for about a year of my stay at the Metropole de France, you helped me in my studies despite your busy schedule.

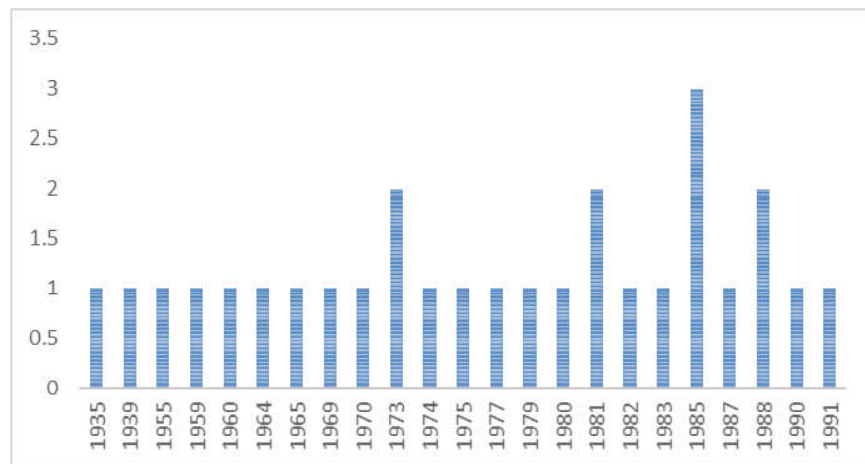


Fig. 7
Temporal distribution of Ḥamidullah's French writings on the
Life of the Prophet (ﷺ)

(Source : Prepared by the author)

Yesterday, on the day of the defense of my Ph.D. thesis, your remarks of praise have touched me enormously and you have given me much to think about your instructive critic. I would therefore like to present you once again my most cordial thanks”.

Another letter to Massignon dated 22 February 1951³⁷ shows that

Table 1: Ḥamidullah's French writings on the Life of the Prophet (ﷺ)

Year	Original Title in French	Translation to English
1935	Documents sur la diplomatie musulmane à l'époque du Prophète et des khalifés orthodoxes	Documents on Muslim Diplomacy in the Time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Orthodox Caliphs
1939	Les champs de bataille au temps du Prophète	Battlefields in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ)
1955	La lettre du Prophète à Héraclius et le sort de l'original	The Prophet's (ﷺ) letter to Heraclius and the fate of the original
1959	Le Prophète de l'Islam	The Prophet of Islam (ﷺ)
1960	Problèmes internationaux lors de la naissance du Prophète	International Problems at the Birth of the Prophet (ﷺ)
1964	La psychologie des grands ennemis du Prophète	The psychology of the great enemies of the Prophet (ﷺ)
1965	Original de la lettre du Prophète à Kisra	Original of the Prophet's (ﷺ) letter to Kisra
1969	La date de naissance du Prophète Muhammad	The date of birth of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)
1970	Le chef de l'état musulman à l'époque du Prophète et des califes	The head of the Muslim state at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the caliphs
1973	Le premier empire musulman du temps du Prophète et de ses trois successeurs	The first Muslim empire of the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his three successors
1973	Les frères et soeurs de lait du Prophète	The Prophet's (ﷺ) milk brothers and sisters
1974	Le Prophète de l'Islam en tant qu'éducateur	The Prophet (ﷺ) of Islam as an Educator
1975	Sur la trace du Saint Prophète dans ses voyages en Arabie de l'Est	On the track of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in his travels in East Arabia

Contd.....

Year	Original Title in French	Translation to English
1977	Les voyages du Prophète avant l'islam	The Prophet's (ﷺ) Journeys Before Islam
1979	L'émigration du Prophète	The Emigration of the Prophet (ﷺ)
1980	Muhammad, prophète de Dieu	Muhammad (ﷺ), the prophet of God
1981	Les ambassades du Prophète et d'Abu Bakr auprès de l'empereur Héraclius et le livre byzantin de la prédication des destinées et l'ambassade du Prophète en Chine	The embassies of the Prophet (ﷺ) and Abu Bakr to the emperor Heraclius and the Byzantine book of the preaching of destinies and the embassy of the Prophet in China
1981	La tolérance dans l'œuvre du Prophète à Médine	Tolerance in the Prophet's (ﷺ) Work in Medinah
1982	Le village arabe au temps du Prophète de l'islam	The Arab village at the time of the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ)
1983	L'original de la lettre du Prophète aux co-rois de l'Oman	The original of the letter of the Prophet (ﷺ) to the co-kings of Oman
1985	Six originaux des lettres du Prophète de l'islam: étude paléographique et historique des lettres du Prophète	Six originals of the letters of the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ): A paleographic and historical study of the letters of the Prophet (ﷺ)
1987	Muhammad, Le Prophète de l'islam en tant qu'éducateur	Muhammad (ﷺ), The Prophet of Islam as an Educator
1988	L'individu (Musulman et non-Musulman) face au pouvoir à l'époque du Prophète et de ses premiers Califes	The individual (Muslim and non-Muslim) facing power in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his first Caliphs
1988	Problèmes constitutionnels aux premiers temps de l'islam	Constitutional problems in the early Islamic period
1990	Les gens de la race noire dans la vie du Prophète de l'islam	People of the Black race in the life of the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ)
1991	La rédaction du Hadith aux premiers temps de l'islam	The writing of the <i>Hadith</i> in the early days of Islam

(Source: Compiled and translated by the author)

the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) is a major theme of his research: “As you know, the period of the Prophet (ﷺ) was my special subject and I kept pushing my Research in the same direction”. In the introduction to his book ‘*Majmu’āt al-Wathā’iq al-Siyāsiyah lil ‘ahdi al-Nabawī wa al-Khilāfah*’ (Compilation Political Document during the Prophetic Period and the Caliphate), he writes:³⁸ “Despite my attachment to collecting all that has been attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ), prayer and salvation on him, I have only retained here what Has been authenticated as proved written”.

Law in Islam

The law in Islam is the favourite subject of Ḥamidullah, after the Qur’ān and the life of the Prophet (ﷺ), as a result of his previous study. A graduate from Osmania University, where he served as an assistant to the Faculty of Law, he obtained a Ph.D. thesis in 1933 from the University of Bonn on ‘*Die Neutralität im Islamischen Völkerrecht*’ (Principle of neutrality in Muslim international law). From 1936 to 1946 he served on the Osmania University for teaching International Law. Without going into details, the topics dealt with in his French writings, are varied as shown in Table 2. As such, on the basis of these sources and others written in other languages, it deserves a Ph.D. thesis.

The Economic System in Islam

In a book review of Ḥamidullah’s book ‘*The Prophet of Islam*’, the orientalist Georges Vajda³⁹ writes: “The author, a lawyer, scholar and expert in political science, is very attentive to the legal, administrative, social and economic aspects of nascent Islam”. He had the privilege of consulting most of the economical manuscripts before they were published: ‘*Kitāb al-Kharāj*’ (Book of Property Tax) of Qāḍi Abū Yūsuf (d. 798), ‘*Kitāb al-Kharāj*’ of ‘Yahyā Ibn Adam (d. 818), ‘*Kitāb al-Amwal*’ (Book of Revenue) of Abū ‘Ubaid al-Qāsim Ibn Salām (d. 838), ‘*Kitāb al-Amwāl*’ of Humaid Ibn Zinjawih (d. 885), ‘*Kitāb al-Kharāj wa Ṣina‘at al-Kitāba*’ (Book of Property Tax and Administrative Art) of Qudāmah Ibn Ja’far (d. 948).⁴⁰

In addition, he was apparently the first to devote an economic

Table 2: Ḥamidullah's French Writings on Law in Islam

Year	Original Title in French	Translation to English
1951	Nouvelle étude des sources du droit islamique	New study of the sources of Islamic law
1953	Règne conjoint: la théorie et la pratique islamiques	Joint Reign: Islamic Theory and Practice
1957	La constitution de la République islamique du Pakistan	Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
1960	Le droit romain a-t-il influencé le droit islamique ?	Has Roman Law Influenced Islamic Law?
1962	La notion du droit international privé	The notion of private international law
1963	La genèse du droit de la preuve en Islam	The Origin of the Law of Evidence in Islam
1964	La loi constitutionnelle du Pakistan	The Constitutional Law of Pakistan
1965	Les liens entre la religion et le droit en Islam	The links between religion and the law in Islam
1968	La philosophie juridique des musulmans	The legal philosophy of Muslims
1970	Le statut du non-Musulman selon l'Islam	The status of non-Muslims according to Islam
1971	Le contrat de la monogamie obligatoire en Islam et l'épisode du Calife 'Abbasside al-Mansour	The contract of the obligatory monogamy in Islam and the episode of the Caliph 'Abbāsīd al-Manṣūr
1973	Problèmes constitutionnels aux premiers temps de l'Islam	Constitutional problems in the early days of Islam
1974	Le problème des origines des sûretés personnelles dans l'Islam	The problem of the origins of personal security in Islam
1974	L'application du droit islamique à la société moderne	The application of Islamic law to modern society
1980	Les droits de l'homme dans l'enseignement du Prophète Mohammad	Human rights in the teaching of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)
1984	Contribution musulmane au droit international	Muslim contribution to international law
1989	Arbitrage international	International arbitration
1989	Liberté d'expression	Freedom of expression

(Source: Compiled and translated by the author)

chapter in the writing of the life of the Prophet (ﷺ),⁴¹ knowing that the Iraqi historian Saleh Ahmed al-Ali (1918-2003)⁴² published an authoritative article on *'The level of prices during the first century of the Hegira'*. It will be followed by other publications; firstly: *'Economic organization at the beginning of Islam'* by the Iraqi historian Abdul-Aziz al-Douri (1919-2010),⁴³ *'Social and economic life during the prophetic era'* by the Iraqi historian Akram Dia'a Al-Umari.⁴⁴

Hamidullah⁴⁵ also seems to be the first to use the notion of Islamic economics in his article entitled *'Islam's Solution to the Basic Economic Problems – the Position of Labour'*. He also used the notion in French in his article entitled *'The foreign policy of Pakistan and its background'*, published in the French journal *'Politique étrangère'*, (Foreign Policy) where he stressed that *"the raison d'être of Pakistan was the desire of the vast majority of these inhabitants to live an Islamic life. The first and most important principle of Pakistan's foreign policy was therefore the fulfillment of Islamic duties"*. One of the consequences of this principle⁴⁶ *"is that the Pakistanis want to keep their neutrality in the struggle between communism and capitalism. The Islamic economic system is an independent system. Islam cannot agree with materialism either among the capitalists or the communists"*.

It is interesting to examine the link between Hamidullah's reflection on the economic system in Islam and the Ph.D. thesis of the Syrian lawyer, academic and politician Mouhssine Barazi (1904-1949)⁴⁷ *'Islamism and socialism'* supported on 7 June 1929 at the University of Paris, at a time when Syria was occupied by France (1920-1946). Among the distinctive features of this Ph.D. thesis is the exploration of the relationship between Islam and socialism, concluding that the latter, by denying private property, was incompatible with the rules of Islamic jurisprudence and that it was therefore inadmissible to justify which is commonly referred to as Islamic socialism in reference to canonical texts or historical facts.⁴⁸

It should also be pointed out that Hamidullah uses the notion of Islamic economics from a comparative perspective, and those of 'economic system' (1959) and 'economic system in Islam' (1966) in his writings for the general public as shown in Table 3. This question deserves to be explored beyond the consideration of the precursor known to historians of science and technology.⁴⁹

Table 3: Ḥamidullah's French Writings on the Economic System in Islam

Year	Original Title in French	Translation to English
1957	Al-Ilaf, ou les rapports économique-diplomatiques de la Mecque pré-islamique	Al-Ilaf, or the economic-diplomatic relationships of pre-Islamic Mecca
1959	Système économique, in Le Prophète de l'Islam	Economic System, In the Book 'the Life of the Prophet (ﷺ)'
1961	Banque sans intérêt	A suggestion for an Interest Free Islamic Monetary Fund
1961	Le monde musulman devant l'économie moderne	The Muslim world in front of the modern economy
1966	Système économique de l'Islam, in Initiation à l'Islam	Economic System of Islam, in the Book 'Introduction to Islam'
1974	Le problème des origines des sûretés personal security in Islam	The problem of the origins of personal security in Islam
1975	La connaissance musulmane du pétrole au Moyen Age	Muslim Knowledge of Petrol and gas during middle age

(Source: Compiled and translated by the author)

The Muslim Question in the Indian Peninsula (South Asia)

After defending his Ph.D. thesis on 31 January 1936 at the University of Paris, Ḥamidullah returned the next day to Ḥyderabad aboard a boat from the port of Marseille to that of Bombay as evidenced by a letter sent from the Phocian city to Louis Massignon on 1 February 1936.⁵⁰ He maintains contact with Paris as correspondent in India for the '*Revue des études islamiques*' (*Journal of Islamic Studies*), as evidenced by two articles (Table 4) entitled '*Letter from India on the Movement of Islamic Studies in India*' (1937), '*Letter of India*' (1938).

In September 1948, the Indian army annexed the state of Ḥyderabad whose prince was Muslim. Shortly before this event, on 21 August 1948, the Prince of Hyderabad sent a delegation to the United Nations Security Council to demand respect for the territorial integrity of Ḥyderabad. Ḥamidullah was a member of this delegation, which was composed of five members.

Table 4. Ḥamidullah's French Writings on the Muslim Question in the Indian Peninsula

Year	Original Title in French	Translation to English
1937	Lettre de l'Inde sur le mouvement des études islamiques dans l'Inde	Letter from India on the Movement of Islamic Studies in India
1938	Lettre de l'Inde	Letter from India
1950	Le progrès des études islamiques au Pakistan	The progress of Islamic studies in Pakistan
1951	La politique étrangère du Pakistan et son arrière-plan	Pakistan's foreign policy and its background
1955	Défense de la culture islamique pendant la domination anglaise de l'Inde	Defense of Islamic Culture during the English Domination of India
1957	La constitution de la République islamique du Pakistan	Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
1957	Les études islamiques au Pakistan	Islamic Studies in Pakistan
1964	La loi constitutionnelle du Pakistan	The Constitutional Law of Pakistan
1969	Les Etudes islamiques à Haiderabad-Deccan	Islamic Studies in Hyderabad-Deccan
1971	La vérité sur l'Inde et le Pakistan: Intrigues impérialistes au Pakistan oriental	The truth about India and Pakistan: Imperialist intrigues in East Pakistan
1980	Le Pakistan, passé et présent	Pakistan, past and present
1990	Les derniers miracles de l'Islam en France et en Inde	The last miracles of Islam in France and India

(Source: Compiled and translated by the author)

The mission did not succeed and Ḥamidullah never returned to Hyderabad, his land of birth. In a letter from Paris to Louis Massignon dated 5 January 1948, he wrote: “I have read, in cuts from the Indian newspapers I have received, that at the University of Hyderabad the language of instruction (i. e. Urdu) has been replaced by Hindi with immediate effect” (Bormans, 2009:3). In another letter,

dated 29 November 1948, he referred to the “*Gandhi’s invaders in Hyderabad*”.⁵¹

He went to nascent Pakistan where he was invited to the drafting committee of the constitution. In a letter to Louis Massignon, dated 24 March, 1950, he wrote: “*My humble work in the Constituent Assembly continues and there have been interesting results; but I do not know if the high-placed will accept them. Nevertheless, there is an undeniable insistence on the part of the people for the Islamization of laws*”.⁵² Preferring scientific research to endless political debates, he resigned from the committee and moved to Paris in a modest apartment at 4 rue Tournon, where the famous French poet Alphonse de la Martine (1790-1869) lived.*

Conclusion

The study of Ḥamidullah’s French writings has shown that the author has devoted more than sixty years of his life to scientific research since his Ph.D. thesis from the middle of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1990s, two years before his departure to the United States for health-related reasons, with a continuous concern for the valorization of the Islamic scientific heritage, on the basis of original manuscripts, so that the study of Islam is not dependent on intellectual modes, nor on state and group interests. Hence the moderate use of the adjective ‘Islamic’ in the comparative study to avoid any unwarranted generalization. In his mind, the Muslim world includes societies, languages, and varied experiences, which must be studied carefully.

Most of his writings have been published in journals and magazines (85%), then in books (11%) or chapters in collective works and interviews (2%). The other activities, first the translation, represent only a very small part (2%). This is explained by his status as a researcher at the CNRS, from 1945 to 1978, for which, like any other research institution, the publication of articles in scientific journals is an important issue.

*Late Pir Hussamuddin Rashdi commenting on his disappointment for preparing the first constitution of Pakistan said: the day he came and said that beaurucrates in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan disagree in collecting material and books on various constitutions. I am disgusted and leaving. Next day he flew away to Paris – *Ed.*

The main themes dealt with are the translation of the Qur'ān, the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) with a preference for diplomatic relations, the law in Islam, the economic system in Islam, the Muslim question in the Indian peninsula which remains a topical subject with the problem of 'status of Rohingya people'.

The interest of this study, as my fellow researcher Abdul Azim Islahi, who is also from Hyderabad, rightly pointed out to me, is to compile the writings of the author in French and for translating eventually into Urdu and English to make them available for researchers from all horizons.

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APPENDIX

Muḥammad Ḥamidullah's Writings in French

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